

OBJECTIONABLE 1950s EC COMICS!



NO. 18
DEC



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CANADA

SHOCK

SUSPENSTORIES

**SHOCKING TALES OF
TENSION**
IN THE
EC TRADITION!

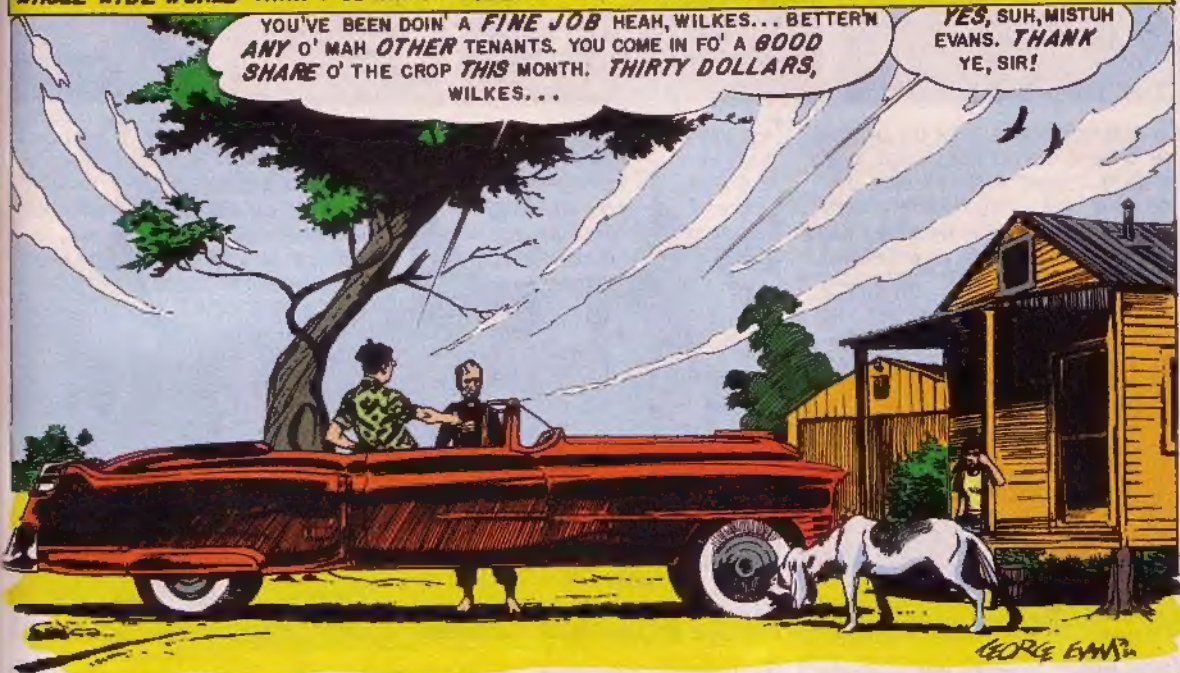


Cadillac FEVER!

AH KIN TELL YE ALL ABOUT IT NOW. AH KIN TELL YE 'CAUSE THINGS COME OUT SO GOOD FER PA. IT WAS ALL ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT PA WANTED, AND AH RECKON AH KNEW HOW BAD HE WANTED IT THAT DAY MR. EVANS CAME TO THE FARM PA RUN FER HIM. MR. EVANS CAME IN HIS NEW, SHINY, RED CADILLAC. AH COULD SEE BY THE WAY PA WAS A-LOOKIN' AT IT, HIS EYES A-GLITTERIN', THAT THERE WAS NOthin' PA WANTED MORE IN THIS WHOLE WIDE WORLD THAN T' BE TAKIN' A RIDE IN A NEW SHINY CADILLAC...

YOU'VE BEEN DOIN' A FINE JOB HEAH, WILKES... BETTERN ANY O' MAH OTHER TENANTS. YOU COME IN FO' A GOOD SHARE O' THE CROP THIS MONTH. THIRTY DOLLARS, WILKES...

YES, SUH, MISTUH EVANS. THANK YE, SIR!



GEORGE EVANS

WHEN MR. EVANS DROVE OFF, PA JUST STOOD THERE WATCHIN' THAT HUNK OF MACHINERY LIKE A STARVIN' MAN STARIN' AT A POT O' STEAMIN' HOG JOWLS...

LOOK AT 'ER GO, RUTHIE! SEE HOW SHE TAKES THEM RUTS WITH SCARCE A BOUNCE. SOMETIMES AH DON'T THINK AH'LL EVER GIT T' RIDE IN ONE...

NOW DON'T YE FRET, PA. YE DID GIT THIRTY DOLLARS. IF'N YOU SAVE A DOLLAR EV'VY MONTH...



SHHH! YE KNOW YOUAH MAW, RUTHIE. IF'N SHE KNOWS HOW MUCH MISTUH EVANS PAID ME, SHE'LL WANT IT ALL!

YOU HIDE A DOLLAR, PA! YOU HIDE IT SO'S MA CAIN'T LAY HER HANDS ON IT. YOU SAVE FO' THAT RIDE...



SO PA HID A DOLLAR IN A SACK
O' CHICKEN MASH...



BUT MA PICKED JUST THAT MORNIN'
T' FEED THE LAYIN' HENS WHICH IS
MAH JOB...



YE GOT NO RIGHT T' LIE
ABOUT WHAT MISTUH
EVANS **PAID** YE, CLYDE
WILKES. AH **FOUND**
THIS DOLLAR WHAR
YE **HID** IT!

A MAN'S GOT
A RIGHT T'
SAVE SOME-
THIN' FOR
HISSELF
OUT'N HIS
EARNIN'S,
EFFIE MAY!



THAT'S HOW IT WAS WITH MA AN' PAW.
HE'D SAVE A BIT O' MONEY AND SHE'D
FIND IT... LIKE WHEN PA GIVE UP
CHAWIN' TOBACCEE T' SAVE THIRTY
CENTS A WEEK. ONE NIGHT MA CAME
T' SUPPER WEARIN' A NEW BONNET...



I GOT IT IN **TOWN**!
ONLY A **DOLLAR**
AN' **FIFTEEN**
CENTS!

WHERE'D
YE GIT THE
MONEY,
EFFIE MAY?



YE **AIN'T**
SAID YE
LIKE IT,
CLYDE!

YE **FOUN'** MAH
SAVIN'S, **DIDN'T**
YE? EFFIE MAY...
YOU **KNEWED**
WHAT AH WAS
A-SAVIN' FOR!



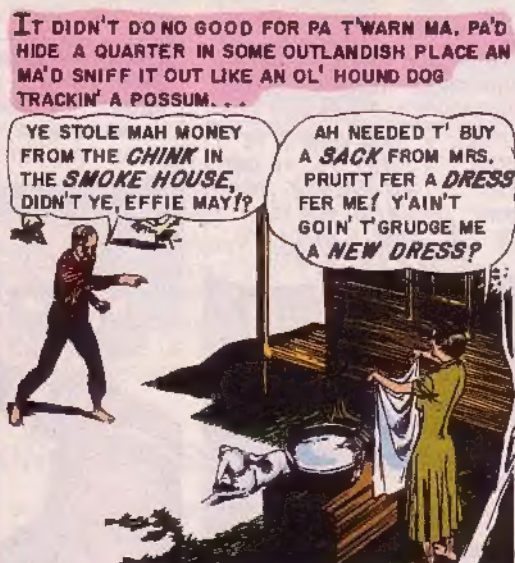
AH **SHO'** 'NUFF KNOW!
YE GOT A **CRAZY NOTION**
T' **RIDE** IN A **CADILLAC**!
WELL, ME AN' **RUTHIE**
AIN'T GONNA **DO WITH-**
OUT JUS' SO'S YE KIN
THROW AWAY **FIFTEEN**
DOLLARS T' **RENT**
ONE!

AH DON'T
MIND
DOIN'
WITHOUT,
MA...



YOU SHET
UP, RUTHIE!

LISTEN, EF! AH NEVER
WANTED MUCH 'CEPT
THAT **ONE THING**!
AH GAVE UP MAH
TOBACCEE T' SAVE
THET MONEY! I'M
WARNIN' YE, EFFIE
MAY! **KEEP YOUAH**
HANDS OFF'N
WHAT I SAVE!



IT DIDN'T DO NO GOOD FOR PA T' WARN MA. PA'D
HIDE A QUARTER IN SOME OUTLANDISH PLACE AN
MA'D SNIFF IT OUT LIKE AN OL' HOUND DOG
TRACKIN' A POSSUM...

YE **STOLE** MAH MONEY
FROM THE **CHINK** IN
THE **SMOKE HOUSE**,
DIDN'T YE, EFFIE MAY?

AH **NEEDED** T' BUY
A **SACK** FROM MRS.
PRUITT FER A **DRESS**
FER ME! Y'AIN'T
GOIN' T' GRUDGE ME
A **NEW DRESS**?



WE GOT **PLENTY** O'
FEED SACKS! WHY
DIDN'T YE USE ONE
O' **THEM**? I'LL
TELL YE. YE JEST
WANT T' **TAKE** MAH
SAVIN'S AN' **SPEND**
'EM. YOUAH A **MEAN**
WOMAN, EF... AN' YE'RE
MAKIN' **ME MEAN**!

BUT PA'D GET OVER HIS MAD RIGHT QUICK AND I'D BE RIDIN' THE MULE WAGON T' THE TBACCO AUCTION WITH HIM AND HE'D BE TALKIN' 'BOUT HOW SORRY HE WAS FER MA...

POOR EF! SHE GITS A-HANKERIN' FER THINGS LIKE THE WIMMEN IN TOWN GOT, AND SHE CAIN'T HELP SWIPIN' MAH MONEY.

WHY'S IT SO SPECIAL IMPORTANT FER YE T'RIDE IN A CAD'LAC, PA? THET'S WHAT AH CAIN'T FIGURE!



FUNNY RUTHIE, BUT THA'S SOMETHIN' AH DON'T UNNERSTAN' MAHSELF. AH DON'T KNOW WHEN AH STARTED WANTIN' IT. ALL AH DO KNOW IS... AH WANT THET RIDE SO BAD AH KIN TASTE IT!

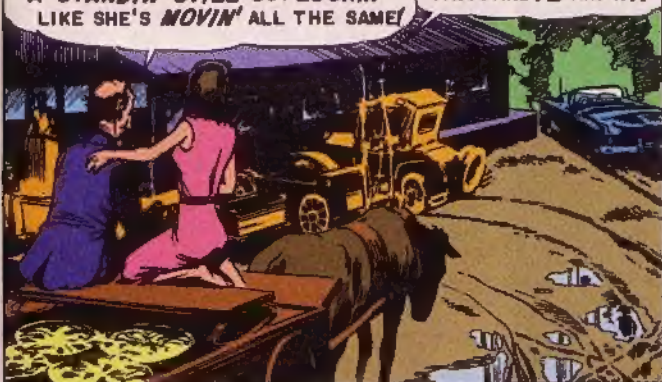
AND AH FEEL BAD FER YE, PA. AH LOVE YE AN' AH WANT FER YE T'HAVE EVERYTHIN' YE WANT!



THEN WE'D GET T' THE AUCTION AND PA'D BE PAYIN' HARDLY NO HEEED T' THE GOIN'S ON. HE'D BE A-LOOKIN' AT JEB WYLER'S BIG BLACK CAD'LAC...

...THE WAY SHE SETS THERE, A-STANDIN' STILL BUT LOOKIN' LIKE SHE'S MOVIN' ALL THE SAME!

JEB WYLER'S RICH, PA... AND YE AIN'T...



POOR PA. AH GUESS AH'L NEVER WANT ANY-THIN' AS MUCH AS HE DID...

JES' ONE RIDE, RUTHIE! THA'S ALL AH WANT. THEN AH COULD GO BACK AN' WORK AN' WORK AN' NEVER MIND A BIT. AH DON' RECKON AH'M ASKIN' FER TOO MUCH, AM AH, RUTHIE?

NO, PA! YE GOT THET MUCH GOMIN'!



IF IT HADN'T A-BEEN THET AH LOVED PA SO, AH NEVER WOULD'VE DARED RUN OVER TO JEB WYLER LIKE AH DID. HE JUST GOGGLED AT ME LIKE AH WAS A CRAZY OL' JAYBIRD...

PA WON'T HURT YOUAH CAD'LAC NONE, MR. WYLER. AN' HE CAN DRIVE GOOD, TOO! HE DRUV THE FLIVVER FER A LONG TIME TILL SHE GIVE OUT!



JEB WYLER... HIM IN THEM FANCY CLOTHES... HE NEVER SAID NOTHIN'. HE JEST LAUGHED...

YOUAH A STINGY MAN, MR. WYLER. LAUGH! BOON. LAUGH! AH HOPE YO' FACE FALLS OFF!

DON'T PAY HER NO 'TENTION, MR. WYLER! SHE DON' MEAN NOTHIN'.



PA DRAGGED ME AWAY AN' AFTER THE AUCTION, WE DRUV HOME...

AH'M GLAD I TRIED T' GIT YE THET RIDE, PA... AN' I'LL KEEP ON TRYIN'...

IT MADE YE OUT TO BE A BEGGIN' FOOL, RUTHIE! AN' IT'S ALL YOUAH MA'S FAULT! DRAT HER!



PA'S FACE GOT REAL DARK AND GRIM AS HE SWORE...

SHE BETTER KEEP HER HANDS OFF MAH SAVIN'S! THAT'S ALL AH GOT T' SAY! SHE JUS' BETTER!



AH THOUGHT PA WAS MAD 'NUFF T' SWAT MA WHEN WE GOT BACK T' THE FARM. MEBBE THEN MA WOULD QUIT TAKIN' HIS MONEY. BUT HE JUST SIMMERED AND LOOKED SAD...

AT LEAST AH GOT SOMETHIN' T' SHOW FER THE MONEY. IF N' YE HAD YOUAH WAY, YE'D SPEND FIFTEEN DOLLARS RENTIN' A CAD'LAC, AN' IT'D BE OVER AN' DONE IN ONE DAY!

AH'D NEVER FERGIT IT, EF...



AN' AH AIN'T GOIN' T' GIVE YE THET CHANCE, CLYDE! AH AIN'T NEVER GOIN' T' LET YE THROW NO MONEY AWAY ON FOOLISHNESS WHEN THERE'S SO MUCH AH NEEDS!

AH'LL SPEND MAH MONEY THE WAY AH SEES FIT, EF! JES' YE KEEP YOUAH PAMS OFFN IT! Y'HEAR?



WHEN PA'D GIT T' FEELIN' LOW, AH'D ASK HIM T' TAKE ME HUNTING. WE ONLY HAD ONE SHOTGUN 'TWEEN US, BUT PA'D DO MOST OF THE SHOOTIN'. HE'D BRING DOWN A 'COON OR 'POSSUM AND HE'D SMILE AN' FERGIT THINGS...

YE GOT 'M, PA! AH DO BELIEVE THERE AIN'T NO BETTER SHOT IN THE WHOLE COUNTY!



BUT WHEN HE WASN'T SHOOTIN', HE'D GIT T' THINKIN'... THINKIN' 'BOUT MA AND HIS MONEY AND THE CAD'LAC RIDE HE COULDN'T GIT... AND HE'D LOOK SO UNHAPPY IT LIKE T'BROKE MY HEART...

DON'T WORRY, PA! SOME DAY YE'LL BE RICH! THEN MEBBE YOU'LL GIT EVERYTHIN' YOU WANT!

NO, RUTHIE! I'LL NEVER BE RICH. AN' AH JES' WANT ONE THING... THET RIDE!

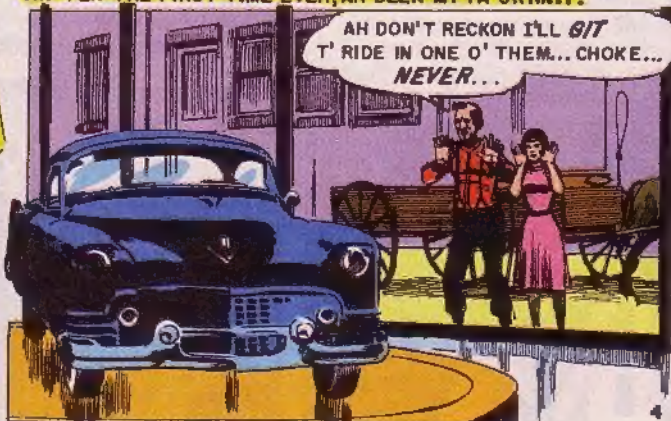


THEN, SUDDENLIKE, HIS JAW'D CLAMP TIGHT AS A WEASEL TRAP AND HE'D JES BLAST AWAY AT NOTHIN' WITH THE SHOTGUN... LIKE MEBBE MA WAS SOMEWHERES OUT THERE IN FRONT O' HIM...



AH THINK THE TIME AH FELT BADDEST WAS WHEN PA AN' ME WAS IN TOWN ONE DAY AN' WE WAS PASSIN' THE AUTO RENTIN' PLACE. PA JUST STOOD THERE LOOKIN' AT THE CADILLAC IN THE WINDOW, AN' FER THE FIRST TIME EVER, AH SEEN MY PA CRYN'...

AH DON'T RECKON I'LL GIT T' RIDE IN ONE O' THEM... CHOKO... NEVER...



AH GOT ALL KNOTTED AND SHAKIN' INSIDE AN' I TOOK PA'S HAND AND LED 'IM AWAY FROM THE WINDAH AND MADE OUT LIKE AH DIDN'T SEE 'IM CRYIN'...



WE'D BEST BE GOIN', PA, IF'N YOUAH GOIN' T'BUY THEM SEEDS FER PLANTIN'...

RUTHIE, AH DON'T KNOW HOW AH'M GOIN'T'MAKE YOUAH MA STOP STEALIN' MAH SAVIN'S... BUT AH WILL! SO HELP ME, AH'LL STOP 'ER!

AH RODE INTO TOWN T' SHERIFF BEN HOYT'S OFFICE...



NO, SUH, AH DIDN'T GO FER NO DOCTOR, SHERIFF, AH COULD SEE MA WAS DEAD AS SHE'S EVER A-GOIN' T' BE!

ALL RIGHT, RUTHIE, LET'S GO BACK T'THE FARM...

SHERIFF HOYT ASKED ME LOTS O' QUESTIONS AS WE RODE BACK HOME.



YE DIDN'T SEE YOUAH PA ARGUIN' WITH YOUAH MA, DID YE, RUTHIE?

NO, BUT THEY WAS ALWAYS ARGUIN'. PA'D SAVE A LI'L MONEY AND MA'D SWIPE IT AND HE'D GET POWERFUL MAD! THIS MORNIN' HE SWORE HE'D KILL HER!

WELL, ONE DAY THE LID BLOWED OFF. MA'D STOLE THE LAST MONEY SHE'D EVER STEAL FROM PA 'CAUSE SHE LAID THERE BY THE COOKSTOVE WITH A HOLE IN HER AS BIG AS YOUAH FIST AND PA'S HARD-MADE DOLLAR STILL IN HER HAND...



ME AN' SHERIFF HOYT FOUND PA A-SITTIN' AND A-STARIN' AT MA AND HE WAS JES' AS WHITE AS SHE WAS ONLY SHE WAS EMPTY O' BLOOD...



THE NEXT TIME AH SAW PA WAS WHEN THEY BRUNG HIM UP FO' TRIAL. AH WAS SITTIN' IN A NICE CHAIR NEXT T' JUDGE SAYERS AN' SOMEONE WAS ASKIN' ME QUESTIONS...

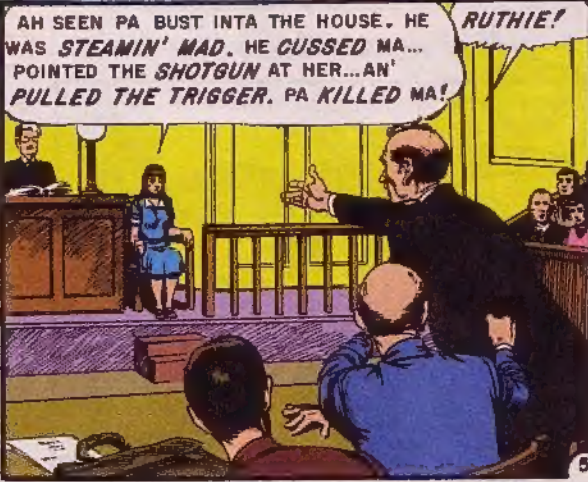


NOW, RUTHIE, TELL THE COURT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED!

DON'T BE AFRAID, RUTHIE. NOBODY CAN HURT YOU!

YES, SUH...

SO AH TOL' MAH STORY...



AH SEEN PA BUST INTO THE HOUSE. HE WAS STEAMIN' MAD. HE CUSS'D MA... POINTED THE SHOTGUN AT HER...AN' PULLED THE TRIGGER. PA KILLED MA!

RUTHIE!

PA JUMPED UP, SCREAMIN' AT ME...
TEARS A-RUNNIN' DOWN HIS FACE...

RUTHIE, WHY'D YOU TELL 'EM THET? DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'AH DOIN'?

AH HAD T' TELL, PA! AH HAD TO!



I FELT SICK THE WAY PA CARRIED ON, BUT IT WAS OVER SOON... WHEN THEM TWELVE GENTS WENT OUT AND CAME BACK AND ONE OF 'EM SAID...

WE, THE JURY, FIND THE DEFENDANT GUILTY AS CHARGED...



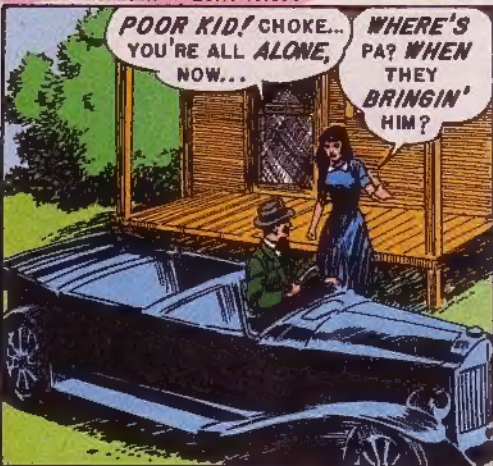
AN' AH FELT SICKER THE NIGHT THEY BURNED UP PA IN THE ELECTRICAL CHAIR...



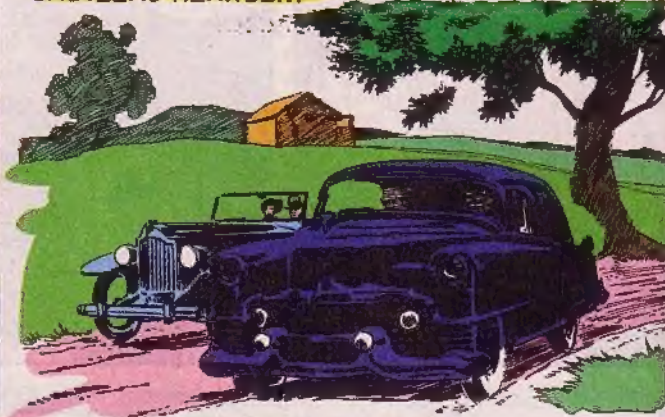
THE NEXT MORNIN', SHERIFF HOYT CAME BY T' PICK ME UP AN' TAKE ME UP TO THE CEMETERY. THEY WAS GOIN' T' BURY PA...

POOR KID! CHOKED... YOU'RE ALL ALONE, NOW...

WHERE'S PA? WHEN THEY BRINGIN' HIM?



AN' THEN AH HEARD IT... THE HUM OF THE *INSINE*... COMIN' DOWN THE ROAD... COMIN' FROM THE *STATE PRISON*... BRINGIN' PA. AN' THEN AH SAW IT... AND AH WAS GLAD! PA WAS FINALLY GETTIN' HIS RIDE IN A CADILLAC... A CADILLAC HEARSE...



AFTER THEY BURIED PA, AH WENT OVER T' SHERIFF HOYT...

YOU BETTER TAKE ME INTA TOWN, SHERIFF! AH GOT SOMETHIN' T' SAY...



Y'SEE, AH *KNEW* ABOUT THAT CADILLAC HEARSE THEY GOT UP AT THE *STATE PRISON*. THAT'S WHY AH BLOWED THET HOLE IN MA WITH THE SHOTGUN BIG AS A FIST AND BLAMED IT ON PA. I *KNEW* IT WAS THE *ONLY* WAY HE'D EVER GIT THET RIDE.



AN' NOW THEY ARE COMIN' FOR ME AN' I'LL BE FOLLOWIN' PA SHORTLY. FUNNY THING! AH'M LOOKIN' FORWARD TO IT! AH SORTA CAUGHT PA'S CADILLAC FEVER...



THE END

The TRAP

THERE WAS GREYNESS THAT BLANKETED EVERYTHING THAT DRIZZLY MORNING... A GREY CAST TO MATT'S TASTELESS COFFEE... A GREY GRIMNESS COATING THE KITCHEN WALLS... A GREYNESS THAT SEEMED TO CLOSE IN ON HIM SO THAT HE EVEN FELT GREY INSIDE HIMSELF. MATT HALL HAD THE TRAPPED HOPELESS AIR OF A CRIMINAL ON THE WITNESS STAND WHOSE ALIBI HAD JUST BEEN BROKEN. YET, MATT WAS NO CRIMINAL... EXCEPT, PERHAPS, IN THE JAUNDICED EYES OF HIS WIFE, HIS COLD RELENTLESS PROSECUTOR...

OKAY! SO YOU *DESERVE* MORE OUT OF LIFE THAN THIS MISERABLE SHACK AND THIS CRUMMY NEIGHBORHOOD. WE'VE ONLY *BEEN* HERE A MONTH. BUSINESS WILL *PICK UP*, IRENE! YOU'LL SEE! WE'LL BE ON TOP OF THE *HEAP* AGAIN, LIKE WE *USED TO*...

WHAT DO YOU *MEAN*, A MONTH!? FOR THREE YEARS NOW... *THREE YEARS*, MATT... WE'VE BEEN GOING FROM *BAD* TO *WORSE*. OUR *NEXT* MOVE WILL BE *OUT ON THE STREET*!



IRENE HALL SLIPPED INTO HER SEAT AT THE KITCHEN TABLE AND THE COLD METALLIC CLINK OF HER SPOON IN THE SUGAR BOWL MATCHED THE ICY STEEL OF HER EYES...

WE *COULD* MOVE TO A *BETTER PLACE*, IRENE! I'VE *OFFERED* TO CASH IN MY *LIFE-INSURANCE POLICY*. WE *GOT* ABOUT *THIRTY-SIX HUNDRED* SOCKED INTO *THAT*...?

OH, NO...!



THAT *POLICY* IS ALL THE SECURITY I'VE *GOT* IF ANY-THING *HAPPENS* TO YOU. AND I'VE GIVEN IT A LOT OF *THOUGHT*, MATT. SOMETHING *IS* GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU!

DON'T...DON'T *TALK* LIKE THAT, IRENE! I...I DON'T *LIKE* IT!



A CONTEMPTUOUS SNEER HARDENED IRENE'S NORMALLY ATTRACTIVE FACE.

YOU'RE **STUPID**, MATT! HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF COLLECTING **ALL** THE **INSURANCE MONEY**... **NOW**... WHILE YOU'RE **ALIVE**! THE **WHOLE TWENTY GRAND**...!

YOU'RE TALKING **CRAZY**, IRENE!

AM I? WE'LL **SEE**! I'VE BEEN **THINKING** A LOT ABOUT IT THE LAST FEW WEEKS... AND I'VE BEEN **DOING** SOMETHING, **TOO**! WE GOT IT JUST ABOUT **ALL ARRANGED**...!

"WE"?! WHO'S "WE"?

MR. GROVER AND ME? HE'S THE **UNDERTAKER**! YOU'VE PASSED HIS PLACE... GROVER'S FUNERAL HOME...TWO BLOCKS DOWN...ON THE CORNER. I'VE BEEN DISCUSSING IT WITH **HIM**. HE'S COMING OVER **THIS MORNING** TO TALK TO US ABOUT IT...



THE GREYNESS OF THE DAY TURNED EVEN GREYER WHEN MR. GROVER ARRIVED. HE QUICKLY EXPLAINED HIS PLAN TO MATT...

SO FAR, IT SOUNDS **PRETTY GOOD**, MR. GROVER BUT WHAT ABOUT THE **POLICE**?

I'VE LIVED IN THIS TOWN ALL MY **LIFE**, HALL. I **KNOW** CHIEF MCCLAIN. HE'LL TAKE A **QUICK LOOK** AT WHAT **APPEARS** TO BE A **STAB** IN THE **HEART**... HE'LL **SEE** THE **BLOOD-STAINED KNIFE**... AND...



...AND MR. GROVER WILL MAKE **SURE** HE'S THERE TO **SAY** YOU'RE **DEAD**! DON'T YOU **SEE**, MATT? CHIEF MCCLAIN WILL TAKE MR. GROVER'S **WORD** FOR IT, AND...

WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF THIS, MR. GROVER?

TWENTY-FIVE PERCENT! **FIVE GRAND!** THAT ISN'T **TOO MUCH** CONSIDERING MY **RISK**...



OKAY, GROVER! YOU GOT YOURSELF A **DEAL**!

GOOD! NOW THE **FIRST** THING YOU HAVE TO DO IS **CHANGE YOUR APPEARANCE**! YOU'RE **NOT WELL-KNOWN** HERE, SO IF YOU GREW A **MOUSTACHE** AND BEGAN WEARING **HORNED-RIMMED GLASSES**, AND PEOPLE GOT TO KNOW YOU **THAT WAY**...



...WHEN THIS WHOLE THING IS **OVER**, YOU COULD **DROP** THE DISGUISE... LOOK LIKE THE **REAL** YOU AGAIN... AND **NO ONE** WOULD BE THE **WISER**!

YOU SURE GOT **EVERYTHING** FIGURED OUT, GROVER?

I **TOLD** YOU, MATT!



AND SO, DURING THE NEXT THREE WEEKS, MATT HALL CULTIVATED A MOUSTACHE, STICKING INDOORS SO NO ONE WOULD SEE HIM. AT THE END OF THAT TIME, HE'D BEGUN TO CIRCULATE FREELY AND HIS THICK-LENNED GLASSES AND HEAVY BLACK MOUSTACHE BECAME FAMILIAR TO HIS NEW NEIGHBORS...

EVENIN', MRS. BRADY... GOOD EVENING, MR. HALL...



MEANWHILE HE'D BEEN GETTING CONSTANT INSTRUCTION FROM MR. GROVER...

REMEMBER! SHALLOW BREATHING, MATT! TAKE ONE DEEP BREATH WHILE ANYONE IS LOOKING, AND THE WHOLE DEAL IS WRECKED!

I'LL REMEMBER, LARRY!



LARRY GROVER'S CALM CONFIDENT MANNER STEADIED MATT FOR THE ORDEAL AND WHEN THE NIGHT FINALLY ARRIVED, MATT WAS WELL-PREPARED. FIRST, THE MORTICIAN SKILLFULLY MANUFACTURED A "WOUND" OVER THE HEART OF THE "MURDERED-MAN-TO-BE..."

LORD! IT LOOKS SO, SO... REAL... CHOKE...

I'VE HAD PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE REPAIRING WOUNDS LIKE THIS! I OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO REVERSE THE PROCESS.



THEN THE MORTICIAN APPLIED A "DEATH PALLOR" TO MATT'S BODY AND FACE...

I'LL DO MY BEST TO FIX IT SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO LIE THERE TOO LONG! IT'S YOUR SHOW, LARRY.



AND AN HOUR LATER, SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT, MATT HALL STRETCHED HIMSELF OUT ON THE WEEDY PATCH OF LAWN OUTSIDE HIS HOME. MR. GROVER POURED A STICKY RED LIQUID OVER THE HOLE RENT THROUGH HIS JACKET AND ON THE GROUND AROUND HIM...

REAL BLOOD!? WHERE'D YOU GET IT?

WHERE DO YOU THINK I GOT IT? I'M AN UNDER-TAKER!



THEN THE MORTICIAN KNELT BESIDE MATT AND SPOKE IN HIS USUAL CONFIDENT MANNER...

GIVE ME A MINUTE OR SO TO GET AWAY, THEN TAKE THE KNIFE, SMEAR IT IN THE BLOOD, AND TOSS IT IN THE ROAD. NEXT, PITCH YOUR EMPTY WALLET IN THE BUSHES! IRENE WILL TAKE OVER FROM THERE.



A FEW MOMENTS LATER, IRENE HALL STEPPED OUTSIDE. SHE STOOD OVER HER HUSBAND, STARING DOWN AT THE GHASTLY SCENE, THEN SCREAMED...

EEEEEEAAAAAAHH...

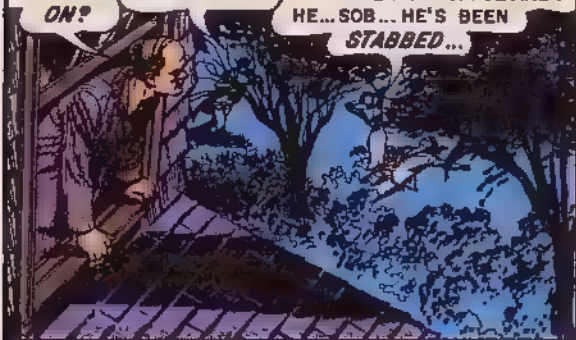


HER SHRILL SCREAM ECHOED ALONG THE DARK, QUIET HOMES THAT LINED THE STREET. HERE AND THERE, A LIGHT BLINKED ON. IRENE SCREAMED AGAIN. PEOPLE CLAD IN NIGHTCLOTHES POURED FROM THE BLACKNESS.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHAT HAPPENED?

POLICE! CALL THE POLICE! MY HUSBAND! HE... SOB... HE'S BEEN STABBED...



UNDERTAKER LARRY GROVER ARRIVED AT THE SCENE ALONG WITH CHIEF NED McLAIN AND A SLEEPY-EYED POLICEMAN...

YOU SURE HE'S DEAD, GROVER?

THERE'S A BRILLIANT QUESTION TO ASK AN UNDERTAKER! LOOK, McLAIN... WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM LIKE THIS! GET SOMETHING TO COVER HIM UP...



AS THE POLICEMAN MOVED TOWARD THE PATROL CAR TO GET A BLANKET...

HEY! LOOK AT THIS! A KNIFE IN THE ROAD. IT'S GOT BLOOD ON IT!

DON'T TOUCH THAT MISTER!



THE OFFICER PICKED UP THE EVIDENCE WITH A HANDKERCHIEF AND PROUDLY PRESENTED IT TO CHIEF McLAIN...

GOOD WORK, FLOYD. LOOKS LIKE THIS IS THE MURDER WEAPON, GROVER. NOW TO QUESTION HIS WIFE!

TAKE IT EASY, McLAIN. SHE'S HAD A BAD SHOCK...



IRENE PUT ON A STERLING PERFORMANCE AS A GRIEVING WIDOW...

NO! SOB... NO! MATT DIDN'T HAVE AN ENEMY IN THE WORLD. OH, MATT... SOB... MATT...

IT WAS A MUGGING, McLAIN. YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THEM LATELY TO KNOW THAT! SOMETHING OUGHT TO BE DONE ABOUT THEM, TOO!



LAY OFF, GROVER! I'M DOING MY BEST. IT'S JUST...

MA'AM! I'M AN UNDERTAKER. MY PLACE IS JUST A COUPLE OF BLOCKS DOWN. IF YOU'D LIKE, I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOUR POOR HUSBAND'S REMAINS!

THANK... SOB... THANK YOU.



A MOMENT LATER, SOMEONE FOUND MATT'S EMPTY WALLET...

YES... HE'D GONE TO THE BANK THIS AFTERNOON. HE HAD THE RENT MONEY... SOB... WITH HIM...

WELL, THAT GLINCHE'S IT, GROVER. IT'S A MUGGING, ALL RIGHT! AND I'LL GET THE MURDERING THIEF IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!



THE NEXT MORNING, MRS. VINCENT, THE HALLS' PLUMP AND KINDLY NEIGHBOR, ACCOMPANIED IRENE HALL TO THE GROVER FUNERAL PARLOR. IT WAS ALL PART OF THE PLAN. SHE STOOD BESIDE THE SOBBING WIDOW AS THEY VIEWED MATT'S STIFF WHITE BODY. . .

POOR GIRL!
SUCH A
TRAGEDY.

TIME IS A GREAT HEALER,
MRS. VINCENT! WE CAN ONLY
WAIT AND COMFORT HER IN
HER HOUR OF MOURNING. . .



MR. GROVER CLOSED THE COFFIN AND WHEELED IT OUT. IRENE TURNED TO MRS. VINCENT. . .

I'M... I'M ALL RIGHT NOW, MRS. VINCENT! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE THIS! YOU'VE BEEN MORE THAN KIND...

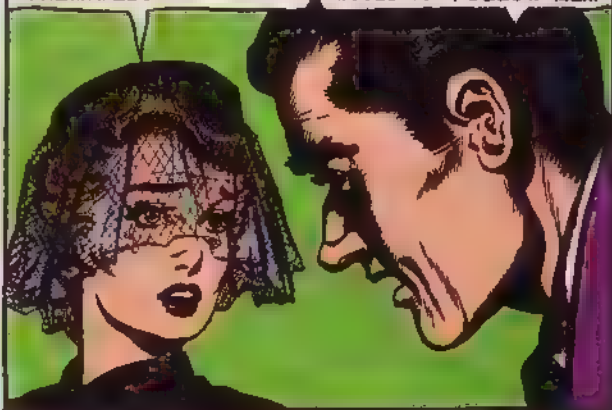
YOU POOR DEAR!
YOU DO NEED SOME-
ONE TO LEAN ON!
NO! I'LL STAY! I
WANT TO...



IRENE LOOKED UP WITH TEAR FILLED EYES...

MATT ALWAYS SAID HE... HE
WANTED TO... SOB... TO BE
CREMATED. CAN YOU...?

I HAVE A CREMATORY
IN THE REAR, MRS. HALL.
WOULD YOU FOLLOW ME...



MRS. VINCENT HAD REACTED JUST AS THEY'D PLANNED... BUT IRENE'S HESITATION HAD GIVEN MATT ENOUGH TIME TO LEAP FROM THE COFFIN AS IT WAS ROLLED DOWN THE LONG HALL TO THE CREMATORY...

OH, MRS. VINCENT!
YOU'RE SO KIND!

THINK NOTHING
OF IT! WHAT'S A
NEIGHBOR FOR!
COME! MR. GROVER
WENT THIS WAY...

QUICK! IN
THAT DOOR!



AND SO, IRENE CRIED AND MR GROVER UTTERED FOND WORDS, AND MRS. VINCENT LOOKED ON WITH MORBID FASCINATION AS THE EMPTY COFFIN WAS ROLLED THROUGH THE YAWNING FURNACE DOOR IN THE HUGE BRICK WALL...

...AND NOW, WE COMMIT
THE BODY OF MATT HALL
TO THE CONSUMING FIRES.



AND AFTERWARDS, THE THREE CONSPIRATORS HAD A HEARTY LAUGH...

YOU SHOULD HAVE
SEEN MRS. VINCENT'S
FACE! I WATCHED
FROM BEHIND THAT
CURTAIN...

A GREAT BIT OF
ACTING ALL
AROUND, I'D SAY!

A TWENTY-
THOUSAND
DOLLAR
PERFORM-
ANCE!



THEN MATT TURNED TO HIS WIFE AND THEIR ACCOMPLICE...

NOW WHAT?

NOW YOU GET OUT OF THIS COUNTRY AND LAY LOW IN MEXICO OR SOUTH AMERICA. IRENE WILL JOIN YOU IN A YEAR OR SO WHEN ALL THIS HAS BLOWN OVER AND THE INSURANCE COMPANY HAS PAID OFF...

A YEAR? I DON'T WANT TO BE AWAY FROM YOU FOR THAT LONG, HONEY!

MATT, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO RISK SPOILING EVERYTHING! DO AS MR. GROVER SAYS! THINK OF THE MONEY WE'LL HAVE WHEN I JOIN YOU!

WHAT ABOUT DOUGH? I CAN'T GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT DOUGH!

I THOUGHT OF THAT! I'LL ADVANCE YOU TWENTY-FIVE HUNDRED, MATT! IRENE CAN PAY ME BACK! YOU CAN LIVE WELL FOR A YEAR ON THAT IN SOUTH AMERICA! HERE...

MATT GRINNED WRYLY, TOOK THE MONEY, AND STARTED FOR THE DOOR...

WELL, WHY NOT?! I CAN USE A LONG VACATION! S'LONG, HONEY...

HOLD IT, MATT! YOU'D BETTER SHAVE OFF THAT MOUSTACHE OR WE'LL ALL HAVE A LONG VACATION... IN A PENITENTIARY!

MATT HALL WENT TO NEW YORK, ARRANGED FOR A PASSPORT UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME, AND BOARDED A SHIP BOUND FOR ARGENTINA...

THOMPSON! RICHARD THOMPSON!

YES, SIR! CABIN 43! THAT'S FORWARD ON DECK A, SIR.

A YEAR PASSED AND MATT WAITED IN RIO FOR IRENE. BUT IRENE DIDN'T COME. HE WROTE, BUT SHE DID NOT ANSWER. FINALLY, AFTER EIGHTEEN MONTHS, HE FLEW HOME...

TO BLAZES WITH THE RISK! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HER. I KNOW IT!

PILLOW, MR. THOMPSON?

THE HOUSE HAD CHANGED. IT WAS ALL FIXED UP. THE LAWN WAS LUSH AND GREEN WITH EXPENSIVE SHRUBS. MATT RANG THE BELL...

SHE'S SURE BEEN SPENDIN' THE DOUGH!

IRENE BLANCHED WHEN SHE SAW MATT. WHEN HE STEPPED FORWARD TO PUT HIS ARMS AROUND HER, SHE FOUGHT HIM OFF...

IRENE! MY LORD! HAVE I CHANGED THAT MUCH? IT'S ME... MATT... YOUR HUSBAND!



MY...WHAT?! LISTEN, MISTER, YOU'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE! YOU'VE GOT ME CONFUSED WITH SOMEONE ELSE!

SHE BACKED OFF AS MATT STARED AT HER...

OUT OUT THE COMEDY, IRENE! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

IRENE! WHO IS THAT MAN? WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH MY WIFE, SIR?



MATT STARED AT LARRY GROVER AND A CHILL CREEPT UP HIS SPINE. THE REALIZATION DAWNED UPON HIM RUDELY...

YOUR...YOUR WIFE!? WHY YOU DIRTY DOUBLE-CROSSING... SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS! YOU TWO PLANNED IT THIS WAY, SHIPPING ME OFF WHILE YOU LIVED IT UP ON MY INSURANCE DOUGH! WELL, I GOT FIFTEEN GRAND COMIN' TO ME AND I WANT IT!



GET OUT OF MY HOUSE BEFORE I CALL THE POLICE, MISTER!

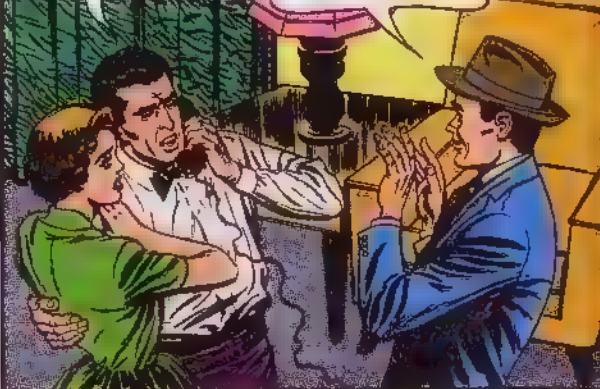
DON'T KID ME, GROVER. YOU WOULDN'T DARE! IF I SPILL THE BEANS, YOU'LL GO UP THE RIVER WITH ME. YOU CAN HAVE IRENE! JUST HAND OVER FIFTEEN GRAND... NOW...



LARRY GROVER PICKED UP THE PHONE...

GIVE ME THE POLICE!

YOU CAN'T BLUFF ME, GROVER! I'M STAYING! IT'S YOUR FUNERAL TOO, YOU KNOW!



CHIEF McLAIN GOT TO THE HOUSE IN A HURRY AND LISTENED TO MATT'S STORY...

...SO THE WHOLE DEAL WAS A PHONY. I WAS NEVER KILLED...

I ALWAYS LIKE TO LAY MY HANDS ON YOU CON MEN. BUT THIS TIME, YOU TRIED TO SHAKE DOWN THE WRONGS CUSTOMER, MISTER. I SAW MATT HALL'S BODY MYSELF! TAKE HIM DOWNTOWN, FLOYD...



THEY BOOKED MATT, "MUGGED" HIM, FINGERPRINTED HIM, AND SLAPPED HIM IN A CELL AS HE SCREAMED IN PROTEST...

CHECK MY FINGER-PRINTS! YOU'LL SEE IF I'M NOT MATT HALL!

FINGERPRINTS! THAT'S IT, CHIEF! I THOUGHT THEY LOOKED FAMILIAR...



THE JAILED MAN'S PRINTS WERE MATCHED WITH THOSE TAKEN FROM A BLOODY KNIFE FOUND IN THE ROAD NEAR THE SCENE OF MATT HALL'S "MURDER" ALMOST TWO YEARS BEFORE...

THEY MATCH!
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT! WE'VE GOT MATT HALL'S KILLER!



MATT HALL FELT AS THOUGH HE WERE LIVING THROUGH A NIGHTMARE FROM THAT MOMENT ON. HE WAS PUT ON TRIAL...

...AND I WILL NOT ONLY SHOW THAT THIS MAN... THIS RICHARD THOMPSON... MURDERED MATT HALL, BUT THAT HE RETURNED TO EXTORT MONEY FROM HIS VICTIM'S WIDOW...



MRS. IRENE HALL GROVER TESTIFIED...

MATT HALL?! HIM?! HOW COULD HE BE?! MATT HALL IS DEAD! CREMATED!



MATT HALL PLEADED...

MAKE GROVER TELL YOU THE TRUTH! MAKE HIM TELL YOU THE COFFIN WAS EMPTY!

THE PRISONER WILL REFRAIN FROM FURTHER OUTBURSTS.



MRS. VINCENT TESTIFIED...

I SAW THE BODY IN THE COFFIN. I SAW THE COFFIN SLID INTO THE FURNACE. IF THAT MAN IS MATT HALL, I'M CRAZY!

YOUR WITNESS...



MATT HALL'S LAWYER COULD GET NOWHERE WITH MRS. VINCENT...

SURE HE LOOKS LIKE MATT HALL WHEN YOU PUT THAT MOUSTACHE AND GLASSES ON HIM. WHO WOULDN'T? BUT IT'S NOT HIM!

MRS. VINCENT! ARE YOU SURE? ARE YOU ABSO-LUTELY SURE?



CHIEF MCLAIN'S TESTIMONY CLINCHED THE CASE, AND AFTER ONLY 32 MINUTES, THE JURY RETURNED A VERDICT OF...

...GUILTY!



THERE WAS A GREYNESS THAT BLANKETED EVERYTHING THAT DRIZZLY MORNING... A GREY CAST TO THE PRISON WALLS... A GREYNESS TO THE SCAFFOLD THEY'D BUILT... A GREYNESS THAT SEEMED TO CLOSE IN ON MATT SO THAT HE EVEN FELT GREY INSIDE HIMSELF AS THEY SLID THE ROPE AROUND HIS NECK AND SPRUNG THE TRAC



...AND HUNG HIM FOR HIS OWN MURDER!

THE END

A SPECIAL EDITORIAL

THIS IS AN APPEAL FOR ACTION!

THE PROBLEM: Comics are under fire . . . horror and crime comics in particular. Due to the efforts of various "do-gooders" and "do-gooder" groups, a large segment of the public is being led to believe that certain comic magazines cause juvenile delinquency, warp the minds of America's youth, and affect the development of the personalities of those who read them! Among these "do-gooders" are: a psychiatrist who has made a lucrative career of attacking comic magazines, certain publishing companies who do not publish comics and who would benefit by their demise, many groups of adults who would like to blame their lack of ability as responsible parents on comic mags instead of on themselves, and various assorted headline hunters. These people are militant. They complain to local police officials, to local magazine retailers, to local wholesalers, and to their congressmen. They complain and complain and threaten and threaten. Eventually, everyone gets frightened. The newsdealer gets frightened. He removes the books from display. The wholesaler gets frightened. He refuses shipments. The congressmen get frightened . . . November is coming! They start an investigation. This wave of hysteria has seriously threatened the very existence of the whole comic magazine industry.

WE BELIEVE: Your editors sincerely believe that the claim of these crusaders . . . that comics are bad for children . . . is *nonsense*. If we, in the slightest way, thought that horror comics, crime comics, or any other kind of comics were harmful to our readers, we would cease publishing them and direct our efforts toward something else!

And we're not alone in our belief. For example: Dr. David Abrahamsen, eminent criminologist, in his book, "Who Are The Guilty?" says, "Comic books do not lead to crime, although they have been widely blamed for it . . . In my experience as a psychiatrist, I cannot remember having seen one boy or girl who has committed a crime, or who became neurotic or psychotic . . . because he or she read comic books." A group led by Dr. Freda Kehm, Mental Health Chairman of the Ill. Congress of the P. T. A., decided that living room violence has "a decided beneficial effect on young minds." Dr. Robert H. Felix, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, said that horror comic books do not originate criminal behavior in children . . . in a way, the horror comics may do some good . . . children may use fantasy, as stimulated by the "comics" as a means of working out natural feelings of aggressiveness.

We also believe that a large portion of our total readership of horror and crime comics is made up of adults. We believe that those who oppose comics are a small minority. Yet this minority is causing the hysteria. The voice of the *majority* . . . you who buy comics, read them, enjoy them, and are not harmed by them . . . has not been heard!

WHAT YOU MUST DO: Unless you act now, the pressure from this minority may force comics from the American scene. It is members of this minority who threaten the local retailers, who threaten the local wholesalers, who have sent letters to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency (now investigating the comic industry).

IT IS TIME THAT THE MAJORITY'S VOICE BE HEARD!

It is time that the Senate Subcommittee hears from YOU . . . *each and every one of you!*

If you agree that comics are harmless entertainment, write a letter or a postcard **TODAY** . . . to.

The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

and in your own words, tell them so. Make it a nice, polite letter! In the case of you younger readers, it would be more effective if you could get your parents to write for you, or perhaps add a P.S. to your letter, as the Senate Subcommittee may not have much respect for the opinions of minors.

Of course, if you or your parents *disagree* with us, and believe that comics ARE bad, let your sentiments be known on that too! The important thing is that the Subcommittee hear from actual comic book readers and/or their parents, rather than from people who never read a comic magazine in their lives, but simply want to destroy them.

It is also important that your local newsdealer be encouraged to continue carrying, displaying, and selling *all kinds* of comics. Speak to him. Have him speak to his wholesaler.

Wherever you can, let your voice and the voices of your parents be raised in protest over the campaign against comics.

But first . . . *right now* . . . please write that letter to the Senate Subcommittee.

Sincerely,
Your grateful editors
(for the whole E. C. Gang)

SLOB!

"It's too much work for one man," old Sikora said, his lower lip trembling. "One man ain't got enough time to take care all these tenants' complaints!"

"Shut up!" Mr. Herndon screeched, a dangerous throb on his throat. "Take me to the basement so I can see for myself how you're neglecting my building! . . . no doors open without squeaking . . . no water comes through pipes you've allowed to rust! You're nothing but a . . . a SLOB!"

Old Sikora blanched, his skin drawn tight. "I don't have to take that from no one," he muttered darkly. "Slob!" answered Mr. Herndon, as the elevator descended amidst groans and shimmies. "Slob! SLOB! SLOB! S-L-O-B!"

Old Sikora sucked air into his scrawny gullet and lunged forward. But his fingers were less than half-way to his employer's throat when Mr. Herndon struck. His big fists hammered relentlessly, against ancient skin and brittle bone. Sikora had sagged to the floor, his face a blob of butchered meat, his head hanging limply on a neck which wasn't quite straight. He was dead.

Mr. Herndon 'carefully' opened the furnace, hefted the old man's body into the dark cavern, threw several bookfulls of flaring matches inside, and slammed the door shut.

That same night a delegation of tenants arrived at Mr. Herndon's home . . . together with three menacing policemen. "You're under arrest for the murder of old Sikora," the oldest officer intoned.

"The body?" Mr. Herndon inquired scornfully. "You found a body? Unless you have one there isn't a shred of evidence that . . ."

"We got a body, pal!" rasped the beef-faced cop. That furnace where you dumped the corpse . . . it's so dirty and clogged that you couldn't start a fire if your life depended on it! Such filth . . .

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Also available this month are CRYPT and WEIRD SCIENCE. Watch for VAULT, WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED next month. Don't forget HAUNT, FRONTLINE COMBAT and CRIME next month. Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic for details)!

BACK ISSUES. CRYPT #1, sold out; FRONT #1-4, \$2 each, all others up thru issue #3, \$1.50 each. CRYPT, W SCI & SHOCK #4-18, and VAULT, W FAN, 2FIST, HAUNT and CRIME #4-15, \$2 each. All others, \$2.50 each. Don't forget the entire 11-issue run of WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY/INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION! Add \$5 per order (\$10 outside US) for S&H.

We'll run SHOCK letters in PANIC. Write to:
SHOCK
GEMSTONE
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

**THIS COMIC REPRINTS
SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES #18 (DEC 54/JAN 55)**

COVER by George Evans

"Cadillac Fever"

"The Trap"

"In the Bag"

"Rundown"

George Evans

Jack Kamen

Bernie Kristgen

Reed Crandall

We welcome letters of comment. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We edit for clarity, accuracy and length. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters to do so we need you add ours on the individual letter.



BLOWHARD



The tall man in the frazzled coat shambled almost absent-mindedly into the bank . . . glanced around uncertainly . . . then stepped up to the wooden railing surrounding the manager's cubicle.

"Can I help...?" the chubby gentleman seated at the spacious desk started to inquire, a rigid professional smile creasing his waxen features.

"You're the manager, huh?" the tall man mumbled, as if reassuring himself. He snuffled, glanced around the bank again, then fumbled a paper bag from the torn pocket of his sagging coat.

"This is a robbery," he announced, in a flat, tired voice. "I got a bomb in this sack, mister . . . unless you hand over all the dough you got in the cashier's booth, I'm gonna drop this bag on the floor and kill all of us!"

The manager's eyes bulged like white onions on toothpicks as he stared in complete bewilderment at the tall man and, then, at the crumpled bag his visitor held. Before he could splutter a protest, the tall man was mumbling again. "I need the money bad," he muttered. "If I can't get my hands on some mazuma I might just as well be dead. That's why I'm ready to kill myself and all of us . . ."

The anxiety on the manager's fat face vanished. His eyes crinkled as he leaned back in his chair. He snorted through his nose, slapped his thigh and began to roar with delight. The squat bank guard waddled up . . . the spindly old cashier looked over from her cage . . . the line of four depositors turned and stared.

"That old gag," the manager gasped, between spasms of laughter, "it's been used so often that it's old even for *television*! The bomb in the paper bag . . . HAAAAAA!"

The bank depositors closed in and the buzz of conversation was audible above the manager's gasping for breath. "The bomb-in-the-paper-bag gimmick!" bel-lowed a thick-set man. "It's been used in dime novels . . . the movies . . . ! "The desperate thief ready to blow himself up!" tittered a bird-like lady in clumsy walking shoes.

"Awright, mac," the squat bank guard started to wheeze, as he laboriously slid a service revolver from a holster hanging around his stomach. "I'll take that dangerous paper bag, mister blowhard . . ."

The tall man's bloodshot eyes circled the group of sneering faces, darted to the revolver glinting in the guard's hand . . . then he dropped the sack to the floor and sprinted to the door with incredible speed. Before anyone could move, he was gone.

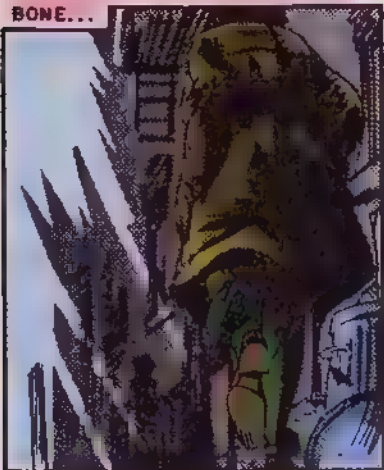
The uncontrolled laughter was a chorus of chuckles, snorts, guffaws, chortles and whinnies. The thick-set man had to be thumped on the back to keep him from choking. When quiet again had been restored, they all turned and looked disdainfully at the paper bag on the floor. The guard stepped forward to pick it up, so that he could hurl it into the trash basket . . .

The violent explosion shattered the windows for two blocks around; so sudden was the blast that the occupants of the bank were dead before a single cry of pain or surprise had been uttered. An estimated fifty people in the neighborhood were knocked to the pavement by the detonation of the home-made bomb.

A tall man in a frazzled coat picked himself up from the sidewalk, patted a coat pocket to make certain that the second of his two crumpled paper bags was unharmed . . . then shambled off in the direction of a bank over on the next avenue.

IN THE BAG

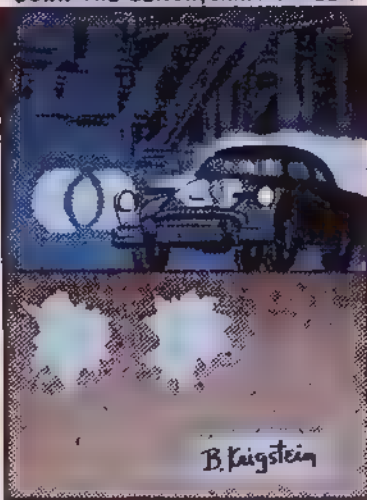
THE NAME'S MOLEOD... BADGE 331074. I'M A PLAIN-CLOTHES COP. THEY GOT ME PATROLLING THE TOUGHEST SECTION IN TOWN. IT'S A QUIET NIGHT THOUGH, AND I'M NOT COMPLAINING... 'CEPT THAT THIS ICY DRIZZLE'S CHILLING ME TO THE BONE...



HE KINDA STUMBLES ALONG AS HE COMES TO THE BUILDINGS. HE'S WEARING ONE OF THOSE LEATHER JACKETS AND HE'S CARRYING SOMETHING... A BAG... A CANVAS BAG WITH MAYBE A BIG ROUND MELON IN IT...



THE SERGEANT MIGHT AS WELL HAVE MADE MY BEAT THE MORGUE, THAT DEAD IT IS TONIGHT. THE ONLY SOUND IS THE SWISHY-HISS OF TIRES NOW AND THEN AS A LONE CAR MOVES DOWN THE BLACK, SHINY STREET...



I TAKE A SQUINT AT HIM AS WE PASS EACH OTHER UNDER A LAMP-POST. HE'S GOT SUNK-IN CHEEKS AND A WIDE-EYED LOOK... LIKE HE'S SCARED OF SOMETHIN'...



IT'S SURE LONELY, AND I GET TO THINKING ABOUT STACEY'S JOINT AND HOW COZY HIS BAR ALWAYS IS AND HOW GOOD A SHOT WOULD FEEL WARMING MY INSIDES. I TURN THE CORNER AND HEAD FOR IT WHEN I SPOT THE LITTLE GUY EDGING DOWN THE WET SIDEWALK...



AND THEN I NOTICE THE BAG AGAIN... AND I SEE IT'S GOT A BIG RED RUST-COLORED STAIN ON THE BOTTOM. IT LOOKS LIKE... LIKE... LIKE DRIED BLOOD, MAYBE...

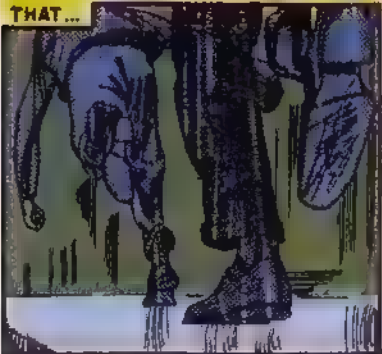


THE LITTLE GUY DON'T STOP. HE KEEPS ON GOING. I BUZZ HIM AGAIN. I KNOW HE HEARS ME...UNLESS HE'S STONE DEAF...

HOLD IT, BUDDY! I WANT T' TALK TO YOU...



HE GIVES ME ONE WILD LOOK, TURNS GHOST-WHITE AND TAKES OFF. I TROT ALONG AFTER HIM, THINKIN' MAYBE THE POOR SUCKER IS JUST SCARED 'CAUSE HE WORKS FOR A BUTCHER AND SWIPED A ROLLED ROAST OR SOMETHING BLOODY LIKE THAT...

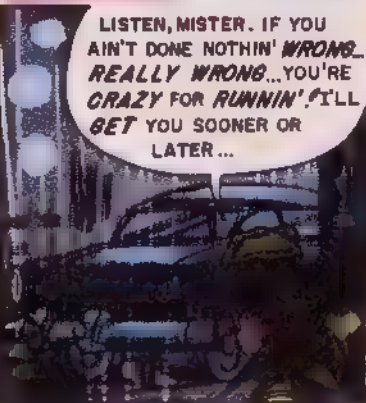


I YANK MY BADGE. I'M WALKING AFTER HIM NOW AND HE'S STARTING TO WALK EVEN FASTER...

I'M A COP, CHUM! TWENTY-FIRST PRECINCT! WHAT'S IN THE BAG?



HE REACHES A CORNER AND DODGES AROUND. BY THE TIME I GET THERE, HE AIN'T IN SIGHT. THERE'S A CAR PARKED AT THE CURB AND I FIGURE HE'S BEHIND IT...

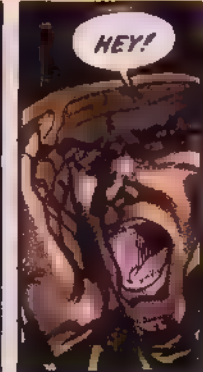


LISTEN, MISTER. IF YOU AIN'T DONE NOthin' WRONG... REALLY WRONG... YOU'RE CRAZY FOR RUNNIN'. I'LL GET YOU SOONER OR LATER...

I START WONDERIN' IF MAYBE I'VE BEEN A COP TOO LONG... IF MAYBE I GOT TOO MUCH IMAGINATION... IF MAYBE THE RUST-COLORED STAIN AIN'T BLOOD AFTER ALL! YEAH? THEN WHAT'S THE CREEP RUNNIN' FOR?



HEY!

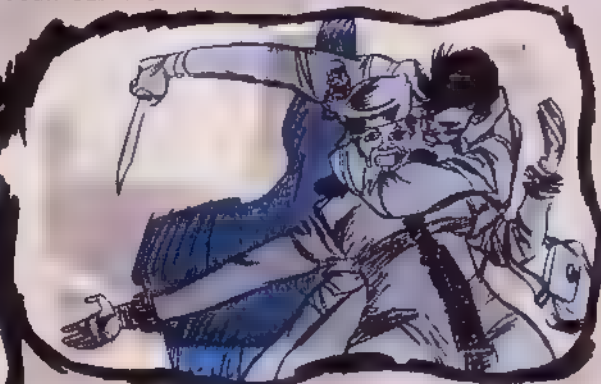


THE GUY DON'T LET OUT A PEEP. I START AROUND THE CAR AND OFF HE GOES, LAMMING OUT LIKE HE'S CARRYING A HOT POTATO... AND I BEGIN THINKING THAT MAYBE THAT BLOODY-BOTTOMED SATCHEL IS SOMETHING HOT.



IN MY TIME ON THE FORCE, I'VE RUN INTO ALL KINDS OF CRAZY BIRDS... PERVERTS... MANIACS... HOMICIDAL FIENDS. I BEGIN PICTURING THIS GUY LURKIN' IN SOME DARK ALLEY WITH AN EMPTY SACK AND A BIG KNIFE... WAITIN'...

AND I REMEMBER AN OLD GEEZER NAMED FISCH WHO CARVED UP OLD LADIES. I SEE THIS CREEP JUMPING SOME POOR OLD GAL AND DRAGGING HER INTO THE ALLEY...



...AND HACKING HER UP AND STUFFING HER HEAD IN THAT SATCHEL... THAT BLOODY-BOTTOMED SATCHEL... 2

THINKING THESE THINGS MAKES ME HATE THE SCURRYING LITTLE RAT. I GOTTA CATCH HIM NOW... CATCH HIM AND FIND OUT FOR SURE. HE TURNS INTO AN ALLEY... AND I'M RIGHT BEHIND HIM, GIVING IT ALL I'VE GOT...



THE POOR IDIOT'S MADE A BIG MISTAKE. THE ALLEY'S BLIND. I GOT HIM TRAPPED, I PULL OUT MY .45 AND MY POCKET FLASH AND START PENCILING THE BEAM AROUND...

GET THIS *STRAIGHT*, MISTER! YOU RUN *THIS* TIME, AND YOU GET A *SLUG* IN YOUR BACK...



THE LIGHT PICKS HIM UP CRINGING IN A CELLAR DOORWAY... WHITE AND SHIVERING...GASPING FOR AIR. HE WRAPS HIS ARMS AROUND THE SATCHEL AND HUGS IT TO HIM LIKE A LITTLE GIRL WITH A DOLL...



OKAY, MAC! LET'S HAVE A LOOK!

NO! NO! IT'S MINE!

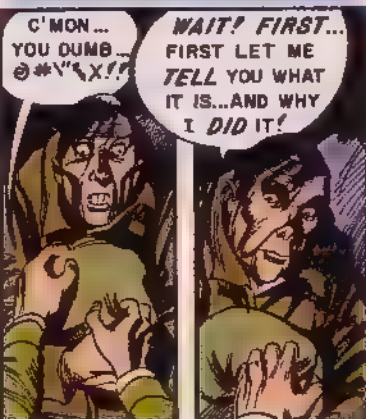
HE STARTS CRYING. I FIGURE HE CAN'T PULL A SHIV ON ME WHILE HE'S HUGGING THE BAG, SO I HOLSTER MY GUN AND MOVE IN, KEEPING MY LIGHT ON HIM...



I CAN'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER, BUDDY! I'M THE STUBBORN TYPE. NOW, HAND IT OVER!

SOB... SOB...

THIS LITTLE CHARACTER IS STRONGER THAN HE LOOKS. I TRY WRENCHING THE BAG AWAY BUT HE'S GOT IT IN A DEATH GRIP...



C'MON... YOU DUMB... @#%*^X!!

WAIT! FIRST... FIRST LET ME TELL YOU WHAT IT IS...AND WHY I DID IT!

I CAN SEE HE'S SCARED SILLY SO I LET GO. HE STARTS TALKING AND I STUDY HIS EYES, TRYIN' TO SEE IF MAYBE HE'S A HOPHEAD...



I HATED HIM! HE WAS ALWAYS PICKING ON ME. "MR. DOMINICK, YOU'RE TWO MINUTES LATE!" "MR. DOMINICK, THESE FIGURES AREN'T VERY NEAT!" MR. DOMINICK, YOUR TIE...YOUR HAIR...YOUR APPEARANCE!"

HE WAS A JOHNNY-COME-LATELY! I WORKED A LONG TIME FOR THE COMPANY BEFORE HE CAME. BUT HE WAS YOUNG... AMBITIOUS...HE HAD A GOOD HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS. HE BECAME HEAD BOOKKEEPER... MY BOSS!



EVERY DAY HE NEEDED ME! NAGGING...NAGGING. I'D GET SICK INSIDE...AND DIZZY, SOMETIMES... AND I WOULDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS DOING. BUT, HE WOULDN'T LET UP! HE WAS SHREWD...CLEVER...SMART!



SO I BOUGHT AN AXE...HEH, HEH... AND TONIGHT I WAITED FOR HIM! HE...HE'S NOT SHREWD ANYMORE! HE HASN'T GOT A GOOD HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS ANYMORE!



I'VE GOT IT!

THE LITTLE GUY'S EYES ARE BLAZING AND HIS LIPS ARE TWISTED UP IN A VICIOUS SNARL AND SALIVA IS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHIN. MY STOMACH CRAWLS AS I LOOK DOWN AT THE ROUND-SHAPED SATCHEL...



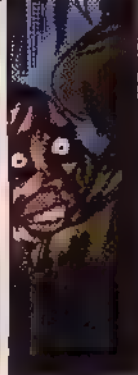
CHOKER... YOU MEAN... IN THAT BAG... HIS... HIS HEAD?



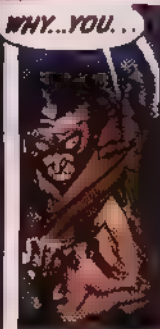
I HAD TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM HIM! YOU CAN SEE THAT, CAN'T YOU? I HAD TO CUT OFF HIS ROTTEN SNEERING SCHEMING HEAD!



YOU... YOU'RE CRAZY AS A LOON!



I FEEL SICK JUST LOOKING AT THE BAG, 'CAUSE NOW I KNOW WHAT'S IN IT... A HEAD... A COLD, STARING, GRIZZLY-GREEN HEAD. AND THEN, SUDDENLY, THE IDIOT IS KICKING AND SCREAMING AND THE FLASHLIGHT IS FLYING FROM MY HAND AND SMASHING ON THE WET CEMENT...

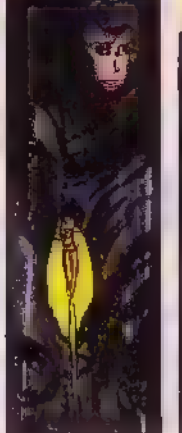


WHY... YOU...

HE COMES UP WITH HIS KNEE IN MY GUT AND WHILE I'M SINKING DOWN IN AGONY, HE TAKES OFF AGAIN...



BY THE TIME I GET MY GUN OUT AND START SHOOTING, I'M SENDING LEAD AT NOTHING, HE'S GONE...



I FIGHT OFF THE NAUSEA AND THE PAIN AND IT'S THE LONGEST DARN ALLEY I EVER LIMP DOWN... BUT NOW I'M ON THE STREET AND I SPOT THE DOLLY TWIN... THE PROWL CAR...



HEY! SULLIVAN! BERGER! IT'S ME... McLEOD...

THE PROWL CAR EASES UP. I SLIDE IN. DID YOU SEE A LITTLE RUNT... FIVE-FOOT-FOUR, MAYBE... CARRYING A CANVAS BAG?



YEAH, HE PASSED US A MINUTE AGO... HEADING SOUTH!

GO SOUTH, SULLIVAN, FAST! THAT SCREWBALL IS A HOMICIDAL MANIAC. HE JUST HACKED THE HEAD OFF SOME GUY AND IT'S IN THAT BAG!



RIGHT...

SULLIVAN GUNS THE PROWL CAR... U-TURNING IT AND TAKING OFF SOUTH AT SIXTY. ONLY THERE AIN'T NO SIGN OF THE CRAZY KILLER...



EMPTY... JUST EMPTY STREETS...

I'LL RADIO IN AN ALARM!

I STICK WITH THE PROWL CAR FOR MAYBE TEN MINUTES AS IT CRUISES THE SIDE STREETS. THEN I GET ANXIOUS...

LE'ME OUT AT THE NEXT CORNER, SULLIVAN. I'M GOING TO TRY IT ON FOOT!

OKAY, MCLEOD

I CLIMB OUT AND WATCH THEM PULL AWAY INTO THE MIST...

I PULL MY COLLAR AROUND MY NECK AND START DOWN THE SHIMMERING SIDEWALK...

AND THEN I HEAR IT...THE CLICK-CLACK OF FEET ECHOING OUT OF THE DRIZZLE...QUICK-MOVING FEET... MOVING TOWARD ME...

I DUCK BACK INTO A DOORWAY AND WAIT. HE COMES THROUGH THE MIST LIKE A SHADOW...A SHADOW CARRYING A MELON-SHAPED CANVAS BAG...

I PULL OUT MY .45. HE COMES CLOSER...SWINGING THE BAG LIKE HE WAS HAPPY... HUMMING SOFTLY...

I GOT YOU... YOU CRAZY @**!

I GOT YOU...

I STEP OUT OF THE DOORWAY AS HE PASSES ME...

HE SPINS AROUND! I'M NOT TAKIN' ANY CHANCES. I SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER, BLASTING HIS FACE AWAY IN A RED SMEAR...

HE PITCHES FORWARD. THE CANVAS BAG DROPS WITH A THUD...

HEY! DOMINICK!



I STAND OVER HIS TWITCHING BODY UNTIL IT DON'T TWITCH ANYMORE



THEN I LOOK AT THE CANVAS SATCHEL LYING IN THE PUDDLE...



THE PROWL CAR SCREAMS UP...

WE HEARD SHOTS! OH, IT'S YOU, MCLEOD! WHAT HAPPENED?

I GOT HIM! I GOT THE MANIAC, SULLIVAN! I HAD TO SHOOT HIM! HE TRIED TO...

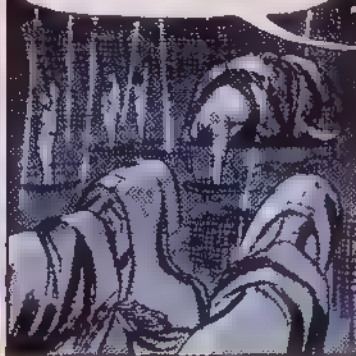


I CAN SEE SULLIVAN'S FACE TURN WHITE. AND I CAN HEAR BERGER WHISPERING...

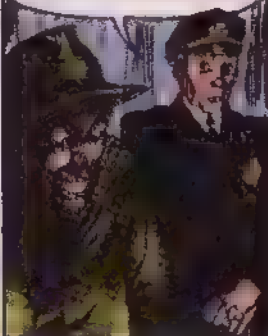


IT...IT CAN'T BE HIM!

OF COURSE, IT'S HIM! LOOK! THERE'S THE BAG! HE'S GOT A HEAD IN THAT BAG! I KNOW IT!



NOT HIM, MCLEOD! NOT THIS GUY! CAR 2 JUST RADIOED IN THAT THEY GOT YOUR MANIAC A FEW MINUTES AGO...

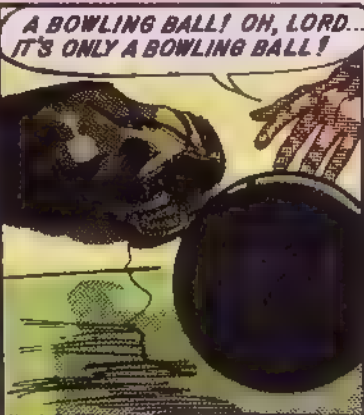


I LOOK DOWN AT THE STILL FIGURE LYING FACE-DOWN ON THE BLOODY, WET SIDEWALK. I LOOK AT THE CANVAS BAG...



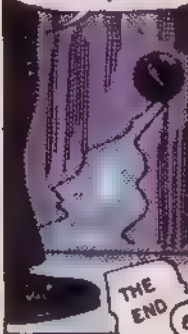
IT'S GOT TO BE! IT'S GOT TO! IT'S ROUND! IT'S GOT A HEAD! IT...

I UNZIP THE SATCHEL. THE ROUND BLACK SPHERE MOANS OUT ONTO THE GUTTER...



A BOWLING BALL! OH, LORD... IT'S ONLY A BOWLING BALL!

YOU...YOU BETTER GIVE ME YOUR GUN, MCLEOD.



THE END

RUN DOWN

IT IS ONE OF THOSE DAMP RAW NIGHTS WHEN THE SKY IS A BROWNISH-BLACK AWNING OVER THE GLOWING CITY AND THE GREY MIST CLINGS TO YOUR CHEEKS LIKE A WET CLAMMY COBWEB. THE GARISH RED NEON SIGN OF THE *GLOVER CASINO* CASTS ITS RUBY OVERTONES ON THE GLISTENING SIDEWALK, THE CREAM-COLORED CADILLAC, AND THE FLASHY-DRESSED GENT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. AS HE EMERGES FROM THE CASINO AND WALKS TOWARD YOU, WHERE YOU HIDE IN THE ALLEY OPPOSITE HIS CAR, YOU FUMBLE IN YOUR POCKET FOR THE COLD PEARL HANDLE OF YOUR SWITCHKNIFE. YOUR NAME IS JOE HARRIS. YOU'RE NOT WORTH A DIME. BUT IN A FEW MINUTES YOU'RE GOING TO BE RICH! *RICH!* YOU SLIP THE KNIFE FROM YOUR POCKET, PRESS THE BUTTON, AND AS THE RAZOR-SHARP BLADE SNAPS OUT, YOU THINK, JOE HARRIS... YOU THINK OF LOVE, AND HATE, AND FRUSTRATION, AND *DOUGH*...



YOU THINK OF YOUR BEAUTIFUL WIFE MARSHA, AND THAT NIGHT YOU FOUND OUT FOR CERTAIN. YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE CAME HOME WITH HER HAIR WILD AND HER LIPSTICK SMEARED AND HER CLOTHES WRINKLED AND RUMPLED...

IT'S *THREE A.M.*,
MARSHA...

NO KIDDIN'! WELL NOBODY
TOLD YOU TO WAIT UP! TURN
OVER AND GO TO SLEEP!



YOU REMEMBER THE SMIRK OF HER LOVELY MOUTH AS SHE CONFIRMED WHAT YOU'D SUSPECTED FOR WEEKS...

YOU'VE...
YOU'VE BEEN
OUT WITH
*ANOTHER
MAN!*

*NOT JUST ANOTHER MAN, JOE!
THERE'S NO OTHER MAN LIKE HIM!
WALLY! HE'S GOT EVERYTHING,
EXCEPT MONEY! BUT WHEN I'M
WITH HIM, I CAN FORGET THAT
HE'S JUST A POOR SLOB LIKE
YOU!*



YOU SPANG FROM THE BED AND TRIED TO HOLD HER, BUT YOU DROPPED YOUR ARMS WHEN YOU FELT HER SHUDDER... SAW THE REVULSION IN HER FACE...

WHY, MARSHA...? WHY?

I WAS TIRED OF WORKING, JOE! YOU WERE MY OUT! SO I MARRIED YOU! I THOUGHT YOU HAD DOUGH! THAT MIGHT'VE MADE UP FOR YOU! BUT YOU HAD NOTHING! YOU'VE GOT NOTHING, JOE! NOTHING!



YOU RECALL HOW CONFUSED YOU WERE... ONLY SURE THAT YOU COULD NEVER STOP LOVING MARSHA... NEVER GIVE HER UP. YOU REMEMBER HOW, THE LAST NIGHT, YOU WATCHED FROM THE WINDOW OF YOUR DARKENED ROOM...

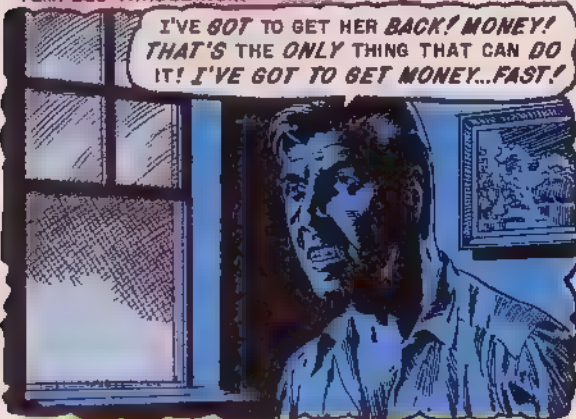


...WATCHED YOUNG HANDSOME WALLY BRING MARSHA HOME. YOU SAW THEM STAND CLOSE, SEARCH FOR EACH OTHER'S LIPS, THEN TREMBLE IN WHAT SEEMED LIKE A NEVER-ENDING EMBRACE...



YOU TURNED AWAY... YOUR HEART POUNDING... YOUR TEMPLES THROBBING...

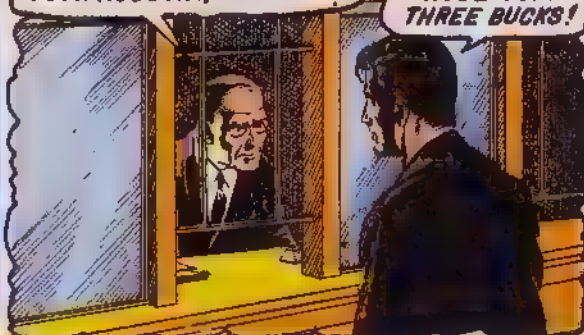
I'VE GOT TO GET HER BACK! MONEY! THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT CAN DO IT! I'VE GOT TO GET MONEY... FAST!



YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALL NIGHT AND THIS MORNING, JOE... AND LIKE A DROWNING MAN CLUTCHING AT STRAWS, YOU GRABBED DESPERATELY AT A LONGSHOT...

YOU SAY YOU WANT TO CLOSE YOUR ACCOUNT, MR. HARRIS?

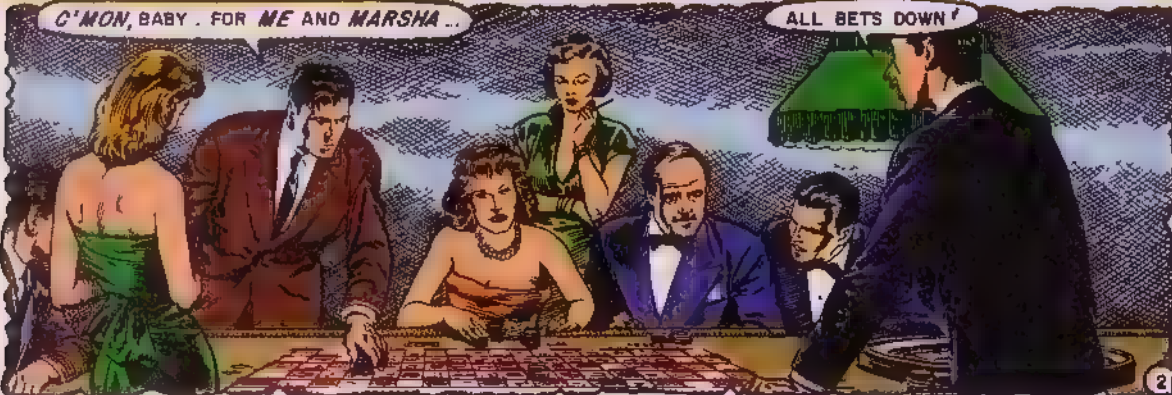
YEAH... THE WHOLE FORTY-THREE BUCKS!



YES, JOE, YOU DECIDED TO SHOOT THE WORKS. YOU DREW OUT ALL OF YOUR SAVINGS THIS AFTERNOON ON YOUR LUNCH HOUR, AND A LITTLE WHILE AGO, YOU BOUGHT FORTY-THREE DOLLARS WORTH OF CHIPS AT THE CLOVER CASINO, PUT THE WHOLE STACK ON "RED", AND MURMURED A LITTLE PRAYER...

G'MON, BABY. FOR ME AND MARSHA...

ALL BETS DOWN!



WITH AN EXPERT FLICK OF THE WRIST, THE CROUPIER SPUN THE WHEEL, TOSSED IN THE LITTLE BALL... AND IN TWENTY SECONDS, IT WAS ALL OVER...

TWENTY-ONE...
BLACK...

YOU STOOD THERE, STARING BLANKLY, AS YOUR CHIPS...YOUR FORTY-THREE DOLLARS...WERE RAKED IN AND PUSHED TOWARD ANOTHER MAN...A FLASHY-DRESSED MAN. HE WAS ON TWENTY-ONE...BLACK. THE CROUPIER RAKED STACKS AND STACKS OF CHIPS TOWARD HIM...

YOUR LUCK IS
GOOD TONIGHT,
MR. FARRELL!

LOOKS THAT
WAY, GEORGE!

YOU WATCHED IN JEALOUS FASCINATION AS, TIME AFTER TIME, THIS FARRELL GUY WON...UNTIL...

I AM *SORRY*, LADIES
AND GENTLEMEN, BUT
MR. FARRELL HAS
BROKEN THE BANK
FOR TONIGHT! THE
WHEEL IS *CLOSED*!

WELL, I
CAN'T SAY
I'M *SORRY*,
GEORGE!
GOOD NIGHT!

YOU PASSED HIM AS HE STOOD AT THE CASHIER'S WINDOW AND YOU SAW THE SIZE OF THE WAD OF BILLS HE WAS ALREADY CARRYING. THEN, TO IT, HE ADDED THE SIXTY ODD GRAND HE'D WON. HIS SMUG SMILE GALLED YOU AS HE REFUSED A BODYGUARD...

IT'S *ALWAYS* LIKE THAT! THE
GUYS THAT *DON'T* NEED IT GET
MORE AND *MORE*...

NO, THANK YOU,
CARL. MY *CADILLAC*
IS PARKED *RIGHT*
OUTSIDE!

HE SHOVED THE KNIFE AWAY AND WHIRLS LIKE A WILDCAT. FOR A SPLIT SECOND, YOU PANIC...REACT OUT OF REFLEX. YOU PLUNGE THE KNIFE BLADE INTO HIS CHEST. HE GASPS...SWAYS A LITTLE...THEN SAGS...

SO YOU PRECEDED HIM INTO THE DARK STREET, SEARCHED FOR THE CADDY, AND HID IN THE ALLEY... WAITING. NOW, YOU GRIP THE KNIFE IN YOUR SWEATY HAND AS HE STEPS TO HIS CAR. YOU SLIP UP BEHIND HIM...BRING THE SCALPEL-HONED BLADE TO HIS THROAT...

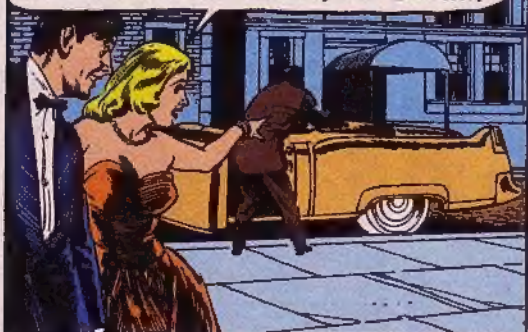
ALL RIGHT, MISTER...NO NOISE...JUST
HAND OVER THAT *ROLL*!

...AS THE DOOR TO THE CASINO OPENS AND YOU HEAR TIPSY LAUGHTER. SOMEONE IS COMING...A COUPLE. YOU GRAB YOUR VICTIM BEFORE HE CAN FALL. YOU DO SOME FAST AD LIBBING...

G'MON, HARRY! YOU'VE HAD
ENOUGH! I'VE GOT TO GET YOU
HOME! AW, G'MON, HARRY!

YOU GLANCE AT THE STAGGERING COUPLE EMERGING FROM THE CASINO, THEN DRAG THE LIFELESS BODY OF YOUR VICTIM TO HIS CAR AND DUMP HIM IN THE BACK. THE WOMAN LAUGHS GIDDILY AND POINTS YOUR WAY. . .

LOOKA, HONEY... A DRUNK! IF THERE'SH ONE THING I CAN'T SHTAN', ISH A DRUNK!



YOU START DRIVING AIMLESSLY, AND NOW, YOU HAVE TIME TO THINK. YOU'RE A MURDERER, JOE! YOUR HEART SLAMS AGAINST YOUR CHEST, YOUR FOOT CHATTERS ON THE GAS PEDAL, AND A COLD RIVULET OF SWEAT TRICKLES DOWN YOUR SPINE...

I DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL HIM! I ONLY WANTED TO ROB HIS ROLL! HE MADE ME! IT WAS LIKE... LIKE SELF DEFENSE...



YOU'RE AN AMATEUR AT THIS MURDER BUSINESS, JOE. YOU GET SCARED. YOU SLAM BACK INTO THE CAR AND DRIVE AWAY, PRAYING THEY DIDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK AT YOU. WHEN YOU REACH THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS, YOU SPOT A DARK ALLEY ON A DESERTED STREET. YOU STOP THE CAR AND GET OUT...

IT'S GOT TO DO! LET 'EM FIND HIM! THEY STILL CAN'T TIE ME IN.



THE COUPLE REELS AWAY AND YOU'RE ALONE WITH THE DEAD MAN... THE VERY RICH DEAD MAN. YOU GO THROUGH HIS POCKETS AND FIND THE ROLL... NEARLY ONE HUNDRED GRAND, JOE!

I'VE GOT TO GET RID OF THIS GUY... DUMP HIM SOMEWHERE...



YOU KNOW NO JURY WILL SWALLOW THAT ONE, JOE! YOU KEEP DRIVING. YOU DRIVE OUT TO THE COUNTRY... TO A LONELY ROAD, YOU STOP AND GET OUT...

I'LL BURY HIM IN THE WOODS HERE AND NO ONE WILL EVER... CHOKO...

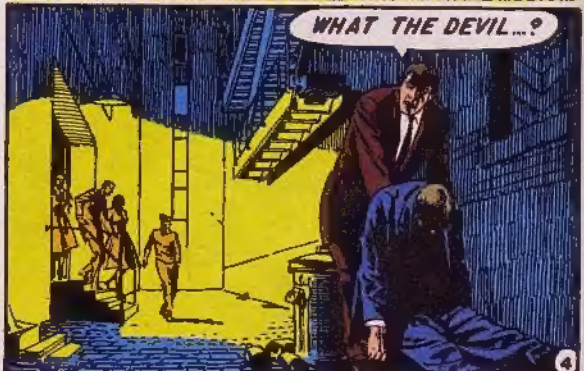


YOU'RE SUDDENLY BATHED IN LIGHT. THE HEADLIGHTS OF ANOTHER CAR HAVE FLASHED ON. TWO LOVERS, THEIR PRIVACY INTRUDED UPON, PREPARE TO DEPART FOR A MORE DESERTED RENDEZVOUS SPOT...



YOU DRAG THE CORPSE WITH THE FLASHY, BLOOD-SOAKED CLOTHES TO THE ALLEY'S DARK MOUTH. SUDDENLY, THE GLOOM IS PIERCED WITH SHAFTS OF LIGHT AND YOUR DESERTED HIDING PLACE SPRINGS ALIVE WITH CHATTERING PEOPLE AND MARTIAL MUSIC...

WHAT THE DEVIL...?



THEY POUR FROM THE DOORWAYS INTO THE ALLEY, JOE. PEOPLE... HUNDREDS OF THEM. IT'S A **MOVIE THEATER!** THE **LATE SHOW** IS OVER! WITH A STRENGTH BORN OF FRENZY YOU PUSH YOUR GORY LOAD BACK INTO THE CADILLAC...



**ROTTEN LUCK!
OF ALL THE
DIRTY @##*!!
ROTTEN LUCK!**

YOU FIND A DARK DESERTED QUIET STREET. YOU PULL UP TO THE CURB OPPOSITE A SEWER. YOU GET OUT, LIFT OPEN THE SEWER COVER, AND DRAG THE BLOODY FORM FROM THE CAR...



NOW, WITH THE HEAVY IRON LID BACK IN PLACE, YOU BREATHE EASILY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AN HOUR. YOU GLANCE DOWN THE STREET... AND YOUR HEART STOPS! POLICE MEN. A PAIR OF THEM... COMING YOUR WAY!...



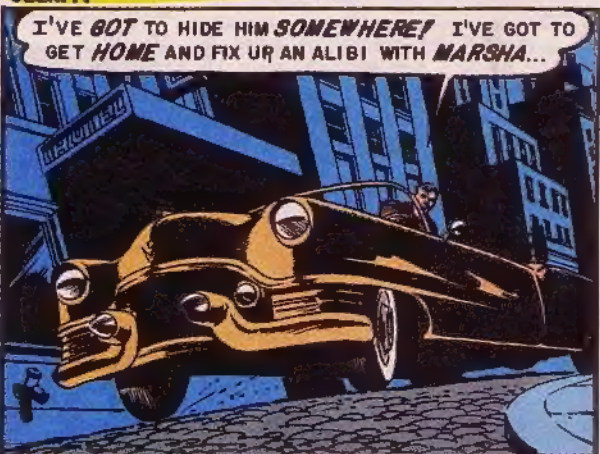
OH, LORD...
WHAT IF THEY
SAW...

WITH QUAKING KNEES, YOU BEGIN TO WALK, GLANCING BACK FURTIVELY AT THE OFFICERS APPROACHING THE SEWER. YOU SEE ONE OF THEM STOP AND POINT...



THEY DID SEE! THEY'RE
CHECKING...

YOU ZOOM AWAY, CURSING, HOPING AGAIN THAT YOU WEREN'T SEEN...



I'VE GOT TO HIDE HIM **SOMEWHERE!** I'VE GOT TO GET HOME AND FIX UP AN ALIBI WITH MARSHA...

THEN YOU PUSH THE STIFFENING CORPSE DOWN INTO THE STINKING BLACK HOLE...



YOU SEE THEM STEP TO THE SEWER. SEE ONE OF THEM BEND DOWN, THEN LOOK UP AT YOU... **RIGHT AT YOU, JOE!** HE CALLS OUT...



HEY, MISTER!
HOLD IT A
MINUTE!

CHOKER...

RUN, JOE! THAT'S IT! RUN!
THEY KNOW! THEY'RE AFTER
YOU...

I CAN'T LET 'EM GET ME NOW...
NOT WHEN I GOT EVERYTHING I
WANT...ALL THE DOUGH I'LL
EVER NEED...AND **MARSHA...**



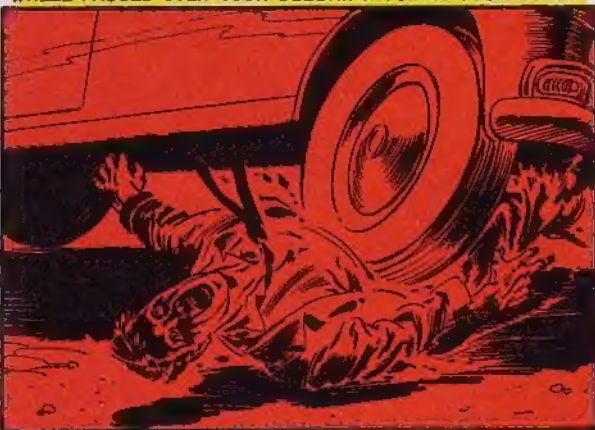
YOU DODGE AND SQUIRM LIKE A
RABBIT, JOE, BUT THE COPS STICK
WITH YOU LIKE GLUE...SHOUTING
AT YOU...



YOU'RE ALMOST HOME, JOE! RUN,
JOE! CROSS THE STREET! SOON YOU'LL
LOOK OUT, JOE! THAT CAR!



IT HITS YOU...CATCHES YOUR LEG IN ITS BUMPER...TWIST-
ING...SPLINTERING BONE...KNOCKING YOU DOWN...THE FRONT
WHEEL PASSES OVER YOUR BELLY...CRUSHING YOUR GUTS...



YOU'VE GOT ONE HUNDRED GRAND AND YOU LIE IN THE
GUTTER, JOE...A GROTESQUE TWISTED HULK, BATTERED
BY AN OLD HEAP OF A CAR. **IRONY?** LOOK AT THE
DRIVER'S FACE! YES, JOE! IT'S **WALLY...YOUR WIFE'S**
LOVER! HE'S SMILING DOWN AT YOU AS AN EFFICIENT
COP'S HANDS FLY THROUGH YOUR POCKETS...



HEY, LOOK AT THIS
WAD OF LETTUCE!

IT...IT'S...**OH, MY GOD...**
IT'S MY HUSBAND!

IF YOU COULD ONLY BLACK OUT! BUT YOU CAN'T.
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE THE HELLISH AGONY. YOU SEE
THE CAR BACK OFF...SEE THE DRIVER GET OUT...
THE COPS POUND UP...

DON'T WORRY,
MISTER! WE SAW
IT **HAPPEN!** IT
WASN'T YOUR
FAULT!

I CAN'T FIGURE WHY THE
SCREWBALL **RAN** LIKE THAT.
WE WERE **JUST** TRYING TO
RETURN THIS EMPTY
WALLET HE DROPPED BY THAT
SEWER...



HERE'S YOUR WIFE, JOE...MARSHA...SHE'S STANDING
OVER YOU, TOO...TALKING TO THE COPS...

YOUR HUSBAND, EH, LADY? WELL,
ALL YOU HAVE TO **DO** IS **IDENTIFY**
YOURSELF AND YOU CAN **PICK UP**
THIS **BANKROLL** AT **HEADQUARTERS**
TOMORROW!

OF COURSE,
OFFICER!



THE **LAST** THING YOU SEE IS MARSHA AND WALLY
STEALING A QUICK **LOOK** AT EACH OTHER...A **QUIET**
LOOK THAT SAYS **SO MUCH...** LIKE, "WE **NEVER**
EXPECTED **THIS** HAPPY TURN OF EVENTS WHEN WE
PLANNED ON RUNNING HIM DOWN." AND THEN,
SLOWLY, EVERYTHING GOES BLACK.

-THE END-